

Ecotourism
Mountains &
Protected Areas



Екотуризъм
планини и
защитени
територии

ПАРТНЬОРИ ЗА БЛАГОДЕНСТВИЕ

National Forum
Sofia, BULGARIA

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София, БЪЛГАРИЯ

Biodiversity Conservation & Economic Growth (BCEG) Project

The First National Forum

Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas: Partners in Prosperity

October 2-5, Sofia Bulgaria

Report

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BCEG Project

Bulgaria Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project

is a collaborative initiative between the

United States Agency for International Development
and the
Government of the Republic of Bulgaria

implemented by
Associates in Rural Development, Inc.

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Acronyms

ARD	Associates in Rural Development, Inc.
BAAT	Bulgarian Association of Alternative Tourism
BATA	Bulgarian Association of Tourism Agencies
BCEG	Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project
BNR	Bulgarian National Radio
BNT	Bulgarian National Television
BTA	Bulgarian Telegraph Agency
CIS	Community of Independent States
UD/FLAG	University of Delaware/Firm Level Assistance Group
GEF	Global Environment Facility (note the acronym “GEF” is also used generically in Bulgaria for the USAID/GEF Biodiversity project)
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
GWU	George Washington University
MOAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
MOE	Ministry of Economy
MOEW	Ministry of Environment and Waters
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NETS	National Eco-Tourism Strategy
NFB	National Forestry Board
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NNPS	National Nature Protection Service (of MOEW)
PMU	Project Management Unit
SDC	Swiss Development Agency
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

Preface

The Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth (BCEG) Project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development, (USAID), as part of its strategic support to the Republic of Bulgaria. The Project is sponsored by USAID in conjunction with the Government of Bulgaria – the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MOEW). The Project is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two governments, and its implementation covers the period: May 2000 – March 2003.

This Project is a logical evolution of earlier USAID assistance to biodiversity conservation in the country. It follows some 10 years of assessment, technical assistance and financing of Bulgaria's biodiversity conservation strategic development, new protected areas legislation, and new national park institutions. The Project is designed to capitalize on the achievements of the Bulgaria Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Biodiversity Project (implemented during the period June 1995-April 2000), and builds on lessons learned.

The BCEG Project addresses six specific contract themes known as tasks or “contract result packages”. The BCEG Project includes the finalization and implementation of two national park management plans, the development of a new management plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park. It assists in the development of financial mechanisms and strategies to ensure the solvency of national parks. The Project pilots economic growth activities with select target groups around two Bulgarian national parks. And it continues to build on the principles of strong public information and awareness as stepping stones for informed public engagement and promotion of biodiversity conservation and protected area management activities.

This Project is issued as a Task Order (Contract Number LAG-I-00-99-00013-00) under the USAID Global Biodiversity and Forestry Indefinite Quantities Contract (IQC); and is implemented on behalf of USAID by Associates in Rural Development, (ARD) Inc., of Burlington, Vermont, USA.

The Project is implemented through a Project Management Unit (PMU) based in Sofia, and includes a Team Leader, three Bulgarian technical specialists, and support staff. Project activities are coordinated through two mechanisms –

- (a) Project Coordination Group – serves as a steering committee for Project planning and monitors implementation. This consists of the National Nature Protection Service of the MOEW, and national park directors, the PMU and USAID;
- (b) Project Counterpart Team – PMU staff working with MOEW/NNPS counterparts.

The Project is largely implemented through the Directorates for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks. Additional technical assistance is provided by Bulgarian and international consultants, and is based on specific terms of reference.

1.0 Introduction

The Context and Goal of the Forum

This National Forum celebrated the International Year of Ecotourism and the International Year of Mountains. It was developed to capitalize on the International Ecotourism Summit held in Quebec in May 2002, and was guided by the Convention on Biological Diversity and its guidelines for sustainable development. It was born of ecotourism efforts associated with Bulgarian protected areas and their conservation, and forms a key part of the national agenda for sustainable tourism development.

The goal of the Forum was to celebrate the progress made in developing an enabling environment for ecotourism in Bulgaria, and to augment our ecotourism efforts with international experience and contributions.

Hosts

The Forum was hosted by the Ministry of Environment and Waters, and the Ministry of Economy, with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.

Sponsorship

The Forum was sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Bulgaria, and was managed on behalf of USAID by Associates in Rural Development, ARD, Inc., under the Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project.

Financial Support

Financial support for the Forum was received from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Swiss Development Agency (SDC), the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), University of Delaware/FLAG of USAID, the World Bank, and the Radisson SAS Hotel.

Strong Political Support

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria Mr. Simeon Saxe Coburg-Gotha, opened the forum.

Additional support for a Bulgarian ecotourism agenda was demonstrated with speeches from the Minister of Environment and Water, Ms. Dolores Arssenova, the Minister of Agriculture and Forests, Mr. Mehmed Dikme; and Deputy Minister of Economy, Mr. Dimiter Hadjinikolov.

Representing the US Ambassador to Bulgaria, Mr. Roderick W. Moore – Deputy Chief of Mission, provided strong U.S. Government endorsement for Bulgaria’s ecotourism efforts and opportunities.

Deputy Ministers Fatme Iliaz, MOEW; Meglena Plougchieva, MOAF; Dimiter Hadjinikolov, MOE; and Deputy Minister of Culture, Bissera Yosifova, each moderated a key session of the Forum. Additional sessions were moderated by: the Foundation for Local Government Reform, Andrei Goranov; by Lubomir Popyordanov, Chairman of the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism; and by Ilian Komitski, on behalf of the UD/FLAG consortium.

Leaders in International Ecotourism

The following international organizations were represented at the Forum, and their representatives presented key note addresses: the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC), The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the PAN Parks Network, and The George Washington University School of Business and Public Management (GWU).

2.0 Events of the Ecotourism Forum

Event A Two day conference, including sessions on:

- Ecotourism Planning and Policy
- Ecotourism Legislation, Regulation & Institutional Frameworks
- Product Development, Marketing and Promotion of Ecotourism
- Monitoring Costs and Benefits of Ecotourism
- National and Southeastern Europe Ecotourism Network Development
- Protected Area Ecotourism Competitive Cluster
- Ecotourism Market Intelligence
- Financing Ecotourism

Each of the sessions included presentations of international keynote speakers, two regional and two national speakers, followed by discussion.

Registered Participants in the conference **227**

Bulgarian Participants	182
International Participants	45

Bulgarian Participants

Bulgarian Participants from Sofia	99
Participants from other Destinations in Bulgaria	83

International Participants

International Participants: Regional	15
International Participants: Other Countries in Europe	18
International Participants: USA	10
International Participants: Other Countries	2

Countries Represented - 17, Albania, Bulgaria, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Canada, Latvia, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, USA, Slovenia, France, Holland, Croatia, Czech Republic.

Representation:

<u>Institution/Organization/Company Represented</u>	<u># Participants</u>
Government	41
National Parks; Nature Parks; Protected Areas	30
International Organizations	14
Projects	26
Local Communities	34
Professional Associations	8
NGOs	19
Consultants; Scientific Institutes; R&D	14
Banks & Investors	9
Private Companies	25
Private Citizens	7

Participants by position in the organization

Decision Makers	82
Experts; Managers; Specialists; Technical Staff; etc.	90
Consultants & Researchers	48
Observers /Position Not Specified/; Others	7

Event B Ecotourism Fair

The Forum was complemented by an Ecotourism Fair in the National Assembly Square, and was located in front of the Hotel Radisson. Three pavilions accommodated 49 exhibitors from the whole country. Exhibits presented ecotourism products and services available for clients and tour-operators.

The Fair enjoyed good weather, and was visited by dignitaries and hundreds of Sofia residents.

Exhibitors **- 49**

From Sofia	15
From other Cities in Bulgaria	21
From Smaller Towns & Villages	13

Type of Organization/Institution/Company

Governmental Institutions & Public Organizations	4
National Parks, Nature Parks, Protected Areas	19
Local Communities	12
Projects	3
Professional Associations	3
NGOs	3
Commercial Participants	5

Event C Ecotourism Project Innovation Awards

With USAID support, 12 ecotourism project innovation awards were conferred at the end of Forum. These awards were drawn from a competition among some 70 ecotourism projects, spread throughout the country. The goal of this competition was to stimulate public-private sector ecotourism links between protected areas and local communities.

Evaluation criteria included the degree to which proposals:

- focused on local, natural assets in protected areas;
- demonstrated protection and conservation of these resources as a priority;
- showed potential for education and interpretation;
- could demonstrate the potential for increasing incomes and improving local livelihoods;

20 finalists were selected from among 69 applicants by an inter-ministerial technical team. Finalists were invited to prepare and present project posters for the Forum. 20 innovation project concepts were presented in a novel fashion in the lobby of the Forum's public area.

Three Deputy Ministers, USAID, and Professor Donald Hawkins formed a "Blue Ribbon" panel of judges and each voted their preference. The 12 poster concepts sporting the most votes were declared winners.

Awardees will each receive a cash amount of 2000 BGL (\$1000 USD). The amount will serve to develop their project concepts into full proposals. Final project proposals are expected by the end of 2002.

The Ambassador of USA to Bulgaria, Hon. James Pardew, presented the awards to ecotourism innovation project generators. He expects to participate in the final presentation of these project concepts at the end of January 2003.

◆ Innovative Ecotourism Project Applications – 69

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| - Parks and local authority | - 14 |
| - NGOs | - 45 |
| - Private business | - 7 |
| - Academic institutions | - 3 |

◆ Nominated Project Concepts	- 20
- Parks and local authorities	- 5
- NGOs	- 12
- Private business	- 3
◆ Awarded Projects	- 12
- Parks	- 3
- NGOs	- 9

3.0 Results of the Ecotourism Forum

3.1. A Commitment to Closer Working Ties

The Ecotourism Forum witnessed an important testimony to Government collaboration on making ecotourism a national priority. A ***Protocol of Collaboration*** was signed by the Ministers of Environment and Water, the Economy, and the Minister of Agriculture and Forests. Three Deputy Ministers witnessed the exchange of the Protocol at a special ceremony.

The Protocol announces the intention of the three ministries to initiate sustainable institutional mechanism for the finalization and implementation of the National Ecotourism Strategy. They also agree to support wide public dialogue regarding the development of ecotourism in the country. They signify that ecotourism and sustainable tourism are priority economic branches, which have significant importance for the socio-economic development in Bulgaria's regions and small communities.

The Protocol provides for cooperative efforts aimed at national and international marketing, attraction of investments, and the establishment of sustainable financial mechanisms for ecotourism development.

Through their Protocol, the three Ministries agree to establish and institutionalize a working group of the ministries for the finalization of the National Ecotourism Strategy.

3.2. The National Eco-Tourism Strategy (NETS)

The First draft of the National Eco-Tourism Strategy was presented at the Forum. It was developed by a working group established under the Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth (BCEG) Project, and with USAID funding. The working group includes experts from the three ministries, national and regional tourism associations, information centers, and NGOs working in the field of nature conservation and regional ecotourism development. It has 16 members.

This draft national ecotourism strategy is developed at the request of the Ministry of Economy and is assisted in its efforts by the international consultant of the BCEG Project, Prof. Donald Hawkins.

The keynote speakers and the participants in the Ecotourism Forum offered many important recommendations. Using the results of the Forum, the working group and international experts joined in an intensive workshop setting to examine the strategy, and to improve upon its content. The next draft of the NETS is expected by the end of November. It will receive another, more expansive review by additional national and regional stakeholders in February, 2003.

3.3. Making News and Keeping the Public Informed

Media coverage associated with the Forum resulted in more than two hours of TV broadcasts, two and half-hours of radio broadcasts and over 60 published articles. The Event – both Forum, Fair, and innovation awards, were widely covered by all central media. Broadcasts and articles continue and are supportive and positive about the opportunities afforded for Bulgaria by pursuing an ecotourism agenda.

The Event was supported through a vigorous pre and post event media campaign, augmented by press conferences that included Government, donor and international representation.

The Event itself was complemented by a full-time press center and employed journalist accreditation to develop and support the regular attendance of reports, and the release of news and information. **55** journalists were accredited to the Forum Press Center, and **79** media representatives subscribed to receive e-mailed information from the Forum. Thus, **32** media were represented at the Forum, of which 20 central media, and 12 specialized publications.

3.4. Statements of the International Experts in Ecotourism

Here is what international experts have to say about Ecotourism, Bulgaria, and the Ecotourism Event:

Oliver Hillel
Tourism Program Coordinator
United Nations Environment Program

As one of Europe's last biodiversity hotspots, Bulgaria is well positioned to grow into a model for European ecotourism: it has an established tourism industry in Sofia and the Black Sea coast, it has hospitable people rooted in an amazing culture and history, it has fascinating historical, religious and natural attractions associated with its coast, mountains, rivers and lakes. The protected area system, and the recently announced Park Fund, will constitute the backbone of a successful ecotourism industry. The Bulgarian initiative to develop a national ecotourism strategy, which the ministries of Environment and Water, Agriculture and Forestry, and Economy have jointly committed to support, is an important proactive move to position this amazing country as a reference for Europe, and globally. UNEP looks forward to continue to support this initiative, and the Bulgarian Government, in its efforts towards sustainable development.

Prof. Dr. Donald Hawkins
George Washington University
Washington D.C.
Ecotourism consultant for Bulgaria

Bulgaria can lead the way forward by developing well-funded protected area management system linked to quality ecotourism products in surrounding communities. A National Ecotourism Strategy holds great potential to improve livelihoods and stimulate prosperity in Bulgaria's rural areas. An ecotourism strategy linking Bulgaria to the Balkan Region could be an effective re-positioning strategy to attract niche markets from major market generating countries.

Sylvie Blangy
Consultant in ecotourism and sustainable tourism
TIES (International Ecotourism Society)

Bulgaria is the first Eastern European country to have achieved the goal of drafting and disseminating a national ecotourism strategy in its country. Apart from Australia in 1995 (ecotourism national conference), I am not aware of any other large consultation like the one you initiated 2 weeks ago.

The challenges are ahead, though. How to circulate the strategy, how to enrich and incorporate what has been said at the Forum level? How to apply the strategy in all fields of the industry? How to translate the national strategy into charters, guidelines, standards and certification schemes at the regional level or by corporations (guides, huts, hotels, activities, and services.)?

To be an international player... Yes. It depends on your ability in applying, translating, influencing other sectors of the economy with it. Bulgaria for sure will draw a lot of the attention in communicating around the strategy. This is an excellent media tool. Bulgaria will serve as an example if they are able to play the role of a coordinator with neighboring countries and other Eastern European countries. Bulgaria can play a leading role by initiating cross border projects and trans-boundary partnership, theme roads, joint parks.

Gabor Vereczi
World Tourism Organization
Sustainable Development of Tourism Section
Program Coordinator

It was an interesting experience participating at the Bulgarian National Forum. On my return I wrote a Memo on the results of the event that I sent to the Secretary General, Mr. Yunis (head of my Section), to the WTO Regional Representative for Europe and the Representative for CIS countries as well. We have circulated the first edition of the WTO Sustainable Development of Tourism e-bulletin last week, in which the Bulgarian Forum is mentioned with link to your website. This electronic newsletter was sent to about 8000 readers worldwide in three languages.

I could say something briefly about the ecotourism development in Bulgaria: Bulgaria has certainly a good potential for ecotourism development, considering its rich natural and cultural heritage. Europe is not just an important generating market for ecotourism, but also a prime ecotourism destination region, within which Central and Eastern European countries are on the rise, according to the WTO market studies. The position of Bulgaria in the global and European ecotourism market place will depend on a number of factors, among them the ability to develop adequate infrastructure for the access of sites and ecotourism related services, integrate ecotourism with other tourism segments (like coastal or cultural tourism) and with wider development programs, organize the operators and service providers that are mostly small or micro and fragmented into consistent ecotourism products, as well as institutionalizing the participatory process for the development and implementation of the National Ecotourism Strategy. This process has been already started, with a good and strong start, where the first background studies have been already completed, the open dialogue have been initiated through the National Forum and the multi-stakeholder working group for the National Strategy, pilot projects and good practice examples have been identified and even recognized with awards, and with the three participating Ministries signed an official agreement for cooperation in ecotourism development, demonstrating a clear commitment.

The Bulgarian National Ecotourism Strategy process is an outstanding case for inter-ministerial and inter-sectorial cooperation, policymaking and strategic ecotourism planning with a participatory process. It could be considered by other Eastern-European Countries, as well as by CIS Countries as a good example to adapt.

Dr. Brian White
World Travel and Tourism Council
Director of the Center for Tourism Leadership

I do believe that Bulgaria can serve as an excellent model of development in ecotourism, and I think the broader category of sustainable tourism is even more appropriate because of the very rich cultural heritage of Bulgaria. CIS countries would do well to consider Bulgaria's approach and achievements to date. The increasing uncertainty of international travel to ecotourism and cultural tourism destinations in South East Asia and elsewhere offers an opportunity for Bulgaria to capitalize on its emerging image as a safe destination. Regional branding could be nearly equally important to national branding. The regional ecotourism/community/cultural opportunities are very strong and could be more emphasized in Western European and North American markets. As Sophia upgrades its heritage buildings and cultural attractions, 'gateway and cluster' theming can become a strong component of Bulgaria's destination appeal. Marketing to specialty associations and clubs (Birders, Botanists, etc.) has very significant potential.

The National Ecotourism Strategy is moving towards the implementation phase and the level of stakeholder awareness is good- also very multi-level with a strong focus on communities and protected areas. The diverse regional and community-based tourism product that is developing is a great strength if a flexible and well-supported organizational network and education/information structure can be put in place. The cooperation of the Ministries is particularly commendable, because so many initiatives that assume a high level of common ownership and cooperation come apart when the institutional arrangements are negotiated.

From my perspective, roads, accommodation, and visitor information services require the most careful attention in the next planning phase to increase competitive advantage.

To conclude, the National Ecotourism Strategy is unfolding as an well-integrated policy and planning initiative that has built a firm foundation for the forthcoming implementation phase. General agreements on operational policy between government ministries, community, and tourism industry stakeholders will ensure that the Strategy will fulfill its promise on the ground as well as in its intentions.

Niek Beunders
PAN Parks Network

Bulgaria will probably be one of the first European nations with a National Ecotourism Strategy supported (and implemented) by three Ministries.

For the success of the Strategy it will be important to integrate it with both national and international strategies for Biodiversity and the National Tourism Strategy. A financial blueprint is a must for the National Strategy and its implementation. It is still important to formulate concrete targets on the ecological, economic and social impacts of eco-tourism at level of Protected areas, regions and national level. Ecotourism should have tangible net benefits for all these interests! Formulate clear guidelines for visitor management strategies in all protected areas. And formulate clear guidelines on the development and implementation of regional ecotourism strategies. Please remember to collaboration with other international initiatives: e.g. Large Herbivore and Large Carnivore Initiative, PAN Parks, EU-policy on biodiversity protection etc.

Thank you for this stimulating conference and the high quality of your hospitality, and of course the enthusiasm and the motivation of the wide range of Bulgarian participants.

Arthur Pedersen
UNESCO World Heritage Center

One of the key results of the conference was to showcase the efforts made by Bulgaria to develop its protected areas and link them to an increasing active private sector interested in tourism products geared to environmental and cultural attractions. These forward-looking advances represent a marked change from the past and the culmination of much effort carried out by a dedicated group of Bulgarians supported by government and international aid agencies, notably USAID.

The creation of a Bulgarian ecotourism strategy is useful in a number of practical ways and provides several lessons learned.

- 1. The development of the strategy seems to have been an effective focal point for garnering stakeholder support and educating people about the newer and different specialty markets. In the past Bulgaria tourism has focused on the Black Sea and a few mountain resorts.*

2. *It has played a role in the development of relationships between protected area staff and the private tourism sector. This relationship is many times difficult, in many counties collaboration is problematic, and the development of the strategy has provided a purpose and a point for mutual understanding and action.*
3. *In an era of government decentralization, the development of the ecotourism strategy has helped to support important environmental groups. This reinforces and helps to balance power to counter unreasonable tourism developments, positively influencing powerful local interests not always concerned with conserving the resource, or the tourism attraction that is the very tourism product.*
4. *An ecotourism strategy leading to a general sustainable tourism policy for the country shows other countries in the region that there are alternative ways of developing tourism. The fact that the action is receiving the support of national leaders and the international community gives the effort further credibility.*

National Forum
“Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas.
Partners in Prosperity”
Sofia, 02-05 October 2002

Program

Wednesday, October 2

12:00 *Ecotourism Fair opens – in front of Radisson Hotel*
Press Center Opens

Forum registration all day – Radisson Hotel

16:00 *Official Opening Session – The Large Hall at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Narodno Sabranie Square*

- Mr. Simeon Saxe Coburg-Gotha – Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria
- Ms. Dolores Arsenova - Minister of Environment and Waters
- Mr. Mehmed Dikme – Minister of Agriculture and Forests
- Mr. Dimiter Hadjinikolov – Deputy Minister of Economy
- Mr. Roderick W. Moore – Deputy Chief of Mission of U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria
- Representatives of International Organizations – UNEP, WTO, WTTC, TIES, UNESCO

18:00 *Reception at Radisson Hotel*

Thursday, October 3

9:00 *Theme A: Ecotourism Planning and Policy*

- Moderator: Ms. Fatme Iliaz, Deputy Minister, MOEW
- Keynote Speaker: Brian White, World Travel and Tourism Council
- Niek Beunders, Chair for Sustainable Tourism Development, Tourism Department, University of Professional Education, Breda, The Netherlands.
- Dushica Trpchevska, Pene Penev, Public Enterprise for Spatial and Urban Plans-Skopje, Macedonia
- Vassil Petrov, Director of Rila National Park
- Anna Petrakieva – National Forestry Board, NFB Policy in the Field of Ecotourism
- Discussion

10:30 Break**11:00 Theme B: Ecotourism Legislation, Regulation & Institutional Frameworks –
This session is supported by United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**

- Moderator: Ms. Meglena Plugchieva, Deputy Minister, MoAF
- Keynote Speaker: Oliver Hillel, UNEP
- Christa Morawa, Director of the Office of Environment and recreation, Tourism and Sports at the Federal Environmental Agency, Berlin, Germany
- Richard Tapper, Director of Environment Business & Development Group, Kingston upon Thames, United Kingdom
- Nela Rachevits, Director of Central Balkan National Park
- Simana Markovska – Pirin Tourism Forum
- Discussion

12:30 Lunch**13:30 Theme C: Product Development, Marketing and Promotion of Ecotourism**

- Moderator: Mr. Dimitar Hadjinikolov, Deputy Minister, MOE
- Keynote Speaker: Sylvie Blangy, TIES
- Julian Ross, Director of a Mountain Tourism NGO, Bistrita-Nasaud, Romania
- Agnese Jakovica, Marketing Manager of the Country Tourism Association, Riga, Latvia
- Nilolay Nenchev – Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park, New experiences in Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park
- Donka Sokolova, Chairman of BATA
- Stefan Skledar, Manager, Rural Development Office, Brezovica, Slovenia
- Discussion

15:00 Break**15:30 Theme D: Monitoring Costs and Benefits of Ecotourism**

- Moderator: Ms. Bissera Yossifova, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Culture
- Keynote Speaker: Art Pedersen, UNESCO
- Michal Burian, Chairman of the Czech Branch of the European Center for Eco Agro Tourism, Brno, Czech Republic
- Alain Schneidenbach, European Culture & Event Consult, Bad Nauheim, Germany
- Maria Vodenska – Kliment Ohridski Sofia University, BCEG Project Consultant
- Nikolina Popova – Kliment Ohridski Sofia University, BCEG Project Consultant
- Alla Pakina, research scientist, Unique Territories Department, Russian Institute of Cultural and Natural Heritage
- Discussion

17:00 Break for Dinner**19:30 Working Session—National and Southeastern Europe Ecotourism Network Development**

- Moderator: Prof. Donald Hawkins, George Washington University, BCEG Project Consultant
- Panel of International, Regional and National Experts
- Discussion

Friday, October 4**9:00 Protected Area Ecotourism Competitive Cluster**

- Moderator: Mr. Georgi Georgiev, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Regional and Urban Development
- Model for Ecotourism Development in Bulgaria - Prof. Donald Hawkins, The George Washington University, BCEG Project Ecotourism Consultant
- Dimitar Marinov, Executive Secretary of the Central Balkan – Kalofer Ecotourism Association
- Vladimir Chapkanski, Beli Iskar Park Section Head, Rila National Park
- Nikolai Ivanov, BCEG Project Consultant, Business Plans and Target Markets
- Discussion

10:30 Break**11:00 Ecotourism Market Intelligence**

- Moderator: Mr. Lyubomir Popyordanov, BAAT
- International Ecotourism Market – Gabor Vereczi, World Tourism Organization
- Bulgarian Ecotourism Market – Plamen Vulchev, BCEG Project Consultant
- Discussion

**12:00 Financing Ecotourism – (The session is sponsored by/University of Delaware/
Firm Level Assistance Group – UD/FLAG- USAID)**

- Moderator: Ilian Komitski, FLAG
- Short presentations from a Panel of prominent Bulgarian Banks and Financing Institutions
- Discussion

13:30 Lunch – (sponsored by UD/FLAG)

14:30 Closing Session

- Moderator: Peter Hetz, BCEG Project Senior Team Leader
- Forum Concluding Statements – MOEW/MOE/MAF Ministers
- MOEW/MOE/MAF Protocol Agreement is formally signed
- Awards Ceremony - Announcement of Ecotourism Innovation Awards – **U.S. Ambassador**, Hon. James Pardew.
- Presentation – A framework for the National Ecotourism Strategy - Draft – Kamelia Georgieva, BCEG Project
- Major Forum Results and Recommendations – Summary, Peter Hetz.

17:00 Reception at Radisson Hotel**Saturday, October 5**

- National Ecotourism Strategy Group holds special consulting meeting with International Guest Speakers
- Fair open to the public
- Visits to pilot communities – Samokov and Kalofer

OPENING SPEECH

By Mr. Simeon Saxe Coburg-Gotha, Prime Minister

To the delegates at the First National Forum “Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas – Partners in Prosperity”, Sofia, October 2-5, 2002

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor and pleasure to open the First National Forum on Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas – Partners in Prosperity.

Bulgaria is a country noted for the diversity of its natural assets, for the variety of its cultural monuments, its lifestyle and tradition. Concentrated within a relatively small area is an enormous wealth of cultural and natural heritage, giving Bulgaria a competitive advantage in Europe, and providing a major precondition for the development of ecotourism in this country.

Ecotourism is an economic sector that has several important tenets – it is business development that aims to protect nature and reinforces people’s positive practices and attitudes towards environmental conservation.

- Ecotourism in Bulgaria can be a successful business activity capturing the initiative of small entrepreneurs in small villages and townships.
- Ecotourism can be used as a tool for economic growth in some of our poorest rural areas.
- Ecotourism is a source of local pride, helping to reinforce cultural traditions that the world admires – sustainable agriculture, crafts and our historical traditions.
- Ecotourism is a local government tool – a viable part of their portfolio of human development – infrastructure investment, skills development, employment, and business growth.
- Ecotourism is also one of the most viable income generating opportunities for people bordering our expansive forests and protected areas

Bulgaria has already secured itself a place in the European tourist market. Ecotourism will undoubtedly supplement and complete our image as a tourist destination while opening fresh opportunities for international economic investment, private and public sector relationships, and cultural cooperation. We are perhaps, embarking on a road that will lead to Bulgaria as the center for ecotourism in the Balkans.

Environmental conservation and nature tourism have a centuries-old history in Bulgaria. Ecotourism is made even more promising in our country because it capitalizes on a growing domestic market sector. Ecotourism is also a tool for the future as it nurtures the already high respect that our young people have for the country’s natural scenery, wild areas and wildlife.

We are convinced that by committing ourselves to support the development of ecotourism, the Bulgarian government is making another strategic step towards the country's economic prosperity and its accession to the European Union. A well-preserved natural heritage and opportunities for development of nature-based tourism are positive values. Bulgaria can lead the way in making this contribution to the European value system.

I have been following and am highly appreciative of the ten-year commitment that the US Government has made to environmental conservation in Bulgaria. Having established the most up-to-date conservation mechanisms for biodiversity conservation in Bulgaria, we are now making a step towards activating a model for the development of ecotourism, which is one of the most environment-friendly uses of natural resources.

We expect this Forum to contribute to the development of a long-term National Strategy for Ecotourism. With this, we will have the tools for planning and attracting investments for this important sub-sector of the national economy. We expect that the efforts of the participants over the next few days will provide us with important elements of this direction.

We also expect the Ecotourism Exhibition to become the first in a regular celebration of regional and local ecotourism initiatives. And that these celebrations will become important meeting point for entrepreneurs from all around the country. This is an effective launch for the creation of a genuine ecotourism market in Bulgaria.

On behalf of the Government of Bulgaria I thank the representatives of the major international organizations in the sphere of environmental protection and ecotourism for their commitment to nature conservation in Bulgaria and for their participation in this Forum. I wish everyone the best of luck!

Simeon Saxe Coburg-Gotha
Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

OPENING SPEECH

By Ms. Dolores Arsenova, Minister of Environment and Waters

To the delegates at the First National Forum “Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas – Partners in Prosperity”, Sofia, October 2-5, 2002

Esteemed Mr. Prime Minister,
Dear Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to greet all Bulgarian and international participants and guests at the First National Forum “Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas – Partners in Prosperity”. It celebrates the International Year of Ecotourism and the International Year of Mountains, declared by the United Nations.

Ecotourism can and must become one of the key fields of prosperity for the population in different Bulgarian regions. We have the most significant conditions for development of ecotourism at the international level – extremely beautiful and diverse nature, favorable geographic location, ancient culture, and hospitable residents.

Ecotourism is based upon one of the most humane concepts for development of the surrounding world – sustainable development. When developing ecotourism, nature and environment are preserved, and at the same time conditions are created for the local population to develop small and medium enterprises, and the local infrastructure is improved. If properly understood, ecotourism may not only contribute significantly to biodiversity conservation, but can also ensure revenues for nature protection activities, for conservation at the local level and for increasing the standard of living of the local population.

Being one of the most rapidly developing sectors in the world, this form of sustainable tourism is internationally recognized as a real opportunity for economic development of natural regions in partnership with the nature protection institutions.

In the Government’s program ecotourism is considered a priority field for our country’s economy. Ecotourism and rural tourism are a very good opportunity, especially for the mountain and semi-mountain regions in the country. The first completed protected area management plans in our country – those for Central Balkan and Rila National Parks – create real opportunities for ecotourism development. At present pilot ecotourism projects are being implemented in two regions – Samokov municipality and Karlovo municipality – and the first results are very promising.

The modern trends in nature protection are aimed at combining the goals of conservation and the goals of economic growth. In view of the above, what the Ministry of Environment and Waters is striving for is not just preserved nature, but preserved nature that makes people richer and happier.

Uniting the efforts of state institutions, including our foreign representative offices, businesses, local authorities and population, formulating a clear vision and policy, and implementing a national action plan in this field will enable us to offer a highly competitive ecotourism product to the international market.

We have to become much more active in attracting international tourists and utilizing to the maximum extent the increased interest in our country if we are to earn worthy positions at the global tourism market, and especially in the field of ecotourism.

Dolores Arsenova
Minister of Environment and Waters

PROTOCOL AGREEMENT
FOR COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF ECOTOURISM
BETWEEN
THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND WATERS,
THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTS, AND
THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY

The Ministry of Environment and Waters (MOEW), the Ministry of Economy (MOE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MOAF) referred to hereinafter as “the Ministries” collectively:

- Recognize that ecotourism is an important national and regional tool for the introduction of sustainable practices in the area of tourism on national and regional levels and that it contributes to the conservation of natural landscapes and biodiversity, local traditions, life style and culture;
- Maintain that ecotourism is generally a small enterprise activity that is closely linked to rural and regional development strategies for local communities;
- Agree that the country’s protected landscapes and biodiversity combined with its history and culture are the cornerstones of favorable national tourism development model, but one that is not sufficiently utilized to date.
- Recognize the existence of a legal framework and significant institutional and organizational potential for ecotourism development.
- Believe that the active development and promotion of ecotourism will contribute to positive attitudes among visitors and citizens towards nature protection and the implementation of the principles of sustainable development, as well as to the diversification and increased attractiveness of the national tourist product.
- Applaud the achievements in ecotourism development already appearing in our country,
- Recognize the need to strengthen cooperation in the formation and implementation of governmental policy, as well as to share in the responsibilities and benefits, and undertaking of cooperative actions by all stakeholders in the direction of its development

With this protocol agreement the Ministries pledge their cooperation to realize Bulgaria’s capacity to develop ecotourism in the context of sustainable development and nature protection. We pledge our efforts to use broad dialogue and the development of partnerships among stakeholders from the private and public sector at national, regional and local levels. We believe this cooperation can only enhance the national image, the tourism product, nature protection, and economic growth.

Our Ministries endorse the general understanding of ECOTOURISM as travel that is conducted to relatively undisturbed natural areas where visitors can see and enjoy nature, accompanying cultural sites, and at the same time encourage their conservation, while maintaining low levels of impact. Ecotourism is also a business opportunity that encourages the development of all related services with a priority for small, local, enterprises that generate fair and equitable benefits to the people most responsible for the success of ecotourism. Ecotourism also contains important elements of environmental education, nature and cultural interpretation, and complements all forms of sustainable tourism.

As a demonstration of our commitment to these ideas the Ministries sign this protocol agreement and agree to the following:

1. Policy in the area of ecotourism

- To unite our efforts for the promotion of ecotourism in the country and to implement a policy of broad public dialogue by encouraging the participation of key stakeholders – governmental institutions, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector – in the discussion of important issues related to the ecotourism in the country and in the making of decisions of national significance, concerning ecotourism, its development and promotion.
- To adopt the recommendations of the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism from May 2002 and ensure that other relevant international documents in the area of ecotourism and sustainable development are reflected in the formation of governmental policy in this direction.
- To initiate and cooperate on a review of the existing legislation, regulations and plans in order to develop an enabling environment for ecotourism, conservation of biodiversity and natural landscape, business investments, improvement of the quality of ecotourism products and services, and the living status of local communities.

2. Mechanisms of Cooperation

- To appoint experts who will serve as long-term coordinators on ecotourism issues.
- To initiate the formation of a working group for ecotourism that will supervise and guide the finalization of the Draft National Ecotourism Strategy and its institutionalization.
- To support the finalization of the National Ecotourism strategy by the end of 2003, and to ensure it is harmonized with efforts to develop a National Tourism Development Plan.
- To organize consultative working meetings and form expert committees for the discussion of concrete issues of public significance in the area of ecotourism, which will involve stakeholders from national, regional and local level.
- To cooperate on the identification of resources for the promotion of ecotourism, to collaborate in the development and implementation of strategic documents, plans and programs in ecotourism.
- To provide methodological and expert assistance to regional and local authorities and to non-governmental associations in the development of relevant local and regional

strategies, and to realize ecotourism as part of operationalizing protected area management plans. In addition, we will provide the same assistance to municipal investment programs that promote ecotourism, to the creation of appropriate tourist products, as well as other initiatives encouraging the promotion of ecotourism.

- To collaborate on and encourage additional examples of public-private sector partnerships for the promotion and development of successful ecotourism models in the country.

3. Financial Mechanisms and Attracting Investments

- To mobilize existing financial resources and to cooperate in the development of mechanisms for long-term and sustainable financial mechanisms and investments for ecotourism.

- To collaborate on the review and endorsement of investment proposals that aim to promote the objectives and ideals of Bulgarian ecotourism.

- To collaborate on plans and programs used to attract ecotourism investment in the country.

4. Information Sharing and Ecotourism Promotion

- To develop joint programs campaigns and initiatives building public awareness in the area of ecotourism. These are efforts that contribute to the improved understanding of the relationship between ecotourism and the conservation of the country's biodiversity.

- To establish a national information network for ecotourism using existing visitors, tourist and information centers, as well as to support expansion of the network into other areas as part of the National tourism information system.

- To cooperate on the identification and utilization of opportunities to present Bulgaria as a competitive ecotourism destination nationally and internationally.

5. Training and Education

- To encourage and seek support for institutions of higher, intermediate, and vocational education to develop training and education curricula and materials in the area of ecotourism,

- To seek support for programs and to identify opportunities to orient and educate local authorities, non-governmental associations and local communities in ecotourism;

6. Quality Standards and Certification

- To encourage the development of standards for the quality of ecotourism products and services in the country. In addition to promote research and popularization of best practices and volunteer schemes that support ecotourism certification,

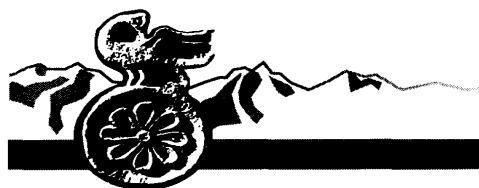
The Ministry of Environment and Waters, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests invite all stakeholders to accept this protocol agreement as a sign of our support and readiness to cooperate in nurturing ecotourism development in Bulgaria and to becoming a leader in ecotourism development in the region.

Signed on 04 October, 2002, at the National Forum “Protected Areas, Mountains and Ecotourism – Partners in Prosperity” in three identical copies, one for each party, by:

DOLORES ARSENOVA
Minister, MOEW

NIKOLAY VASSILEV
Minister, MOE

MEHMED DIKME
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National Forum
"Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas.
Partners in Prosperity"
Sofia, 02-05 October 2002

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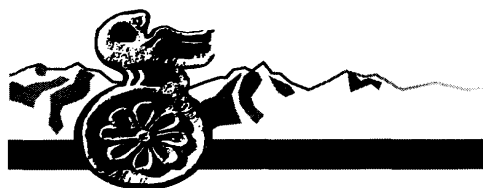
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National Forum
"Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas.
Partners in Prosperity"
Sofia, 02-05 October 2002

LIST OF EXHIBITORS

No	Exhibitor Stand #	INFORMATION ON THE EXHIBITORS	
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4.	A-5	"Neophron" Ltd.	Mr. Dimitar Georgiev Tel.: (+359-52) 634584 Mob.: (+359-88) 420159 e-mail: neophron@dir.bg
5.	A-6	"Cartographia" Ltd.	Ms. Tanya Bogdanova Tel.: (+359-2) 55-40-95 e-mail: cartographia@internet-bg.net
6.	A-7	"Remark" Tour Club	Mr. Nikolay Zarichinov, Ms. Daria Zarichinova 1 Rayko Aleksiev Street, Sofia 1113, Bulgaria Mob.: (+359-87) 831971 e-mail: remark@interbgc.com
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No	Exhibitor Stand #	INFORMATION ON THE EXHIBITORS	
		EXHIBITOR	CONTACT DETAILS
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13.	B-10	BTU - Bulgarian Tourist Union	Mr. Ivo Trenev Tel.: (+359-2) 930-0674 e-mail: btu_radiocontact@abv.bg
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20.	B-18	"Vitosha" Nature Park "Agrolink" Society	Ms. Yulia Mihailova Tel.: (+359-2) 989-5377 e-mail: park_vitosha@sbline.net Ms. Svetla Nikolova Tel.: (+359-2) 46-66-75 e-mail: agrolink@bgnet.bg
21.	B-19	"Rilski Manastir" Nature Park	Mr. Kamen Galabov Tel./Fax: (+359-7054) 2293 e-mail: nina_g@mail.bg
22.	B-20	"Sinite Kamani" Nature Park	Mr. Ivan Ivanov, Director e-mail: dpp.skamani@sl.bia-bg.com

No	Exhibitor Stand #	INFORMATION ON THE EXHIBITORS	
		EXHIBITOR	CONTACT DETAILS
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28.	C-26	GTZ - German Society for Technical Cooperation	Ms. Evelina Stefanova Tel.: (+359-2) 9651017, (+359-2) 9630842 e-mail: stefanova@gtz-bg.com Mr. Georgy Pamporov Mob.: (+359-48) 833719
29.	C-27	"Rila" Ecotourism Association	Mr. Nikolay Dzhambazki, Executive Director Mob.: (+359-88) 573133 e-mail: ecotourism_rila@yahoo.co.uk
30.	C-28&29	"Cultural Tourism"	Mr. Peter Miladinov (Ministry of Culture) Тел.: (+359-2) 988-0233, (+359-2) 987-9324 e-mail: peter_miladinov@yahoo.com Mr. Nasko Yakimov (Ministry of Culture) Mob.: (+359-88) 843112 Mr. Emil Yordanov (Bulgarian National Committee for ICOMOS) Mob.: (+359-48) 853779 e-mail: icomosbg@bgnet.bg
31.	C-31	Federation of Environmental Associations "The Green Balkans"	Ms. Valentina Fidanova Tel.: (+359-32) 626977 e-mail: greenbal@mbox.digsys.bg
32.	C-32	Pirin Tourist Forum	Ms. Simana Markovska Tel.: (+359-73) 36795 e-mail: ptf@pirin-tourism.bg
33.	C-33&34	Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds - Information Centre "Madjarovo" Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds - Information Centre "Poda"	Mr. Boris Barov, Executive Director - BSPB Mob.: (+359-88) 539996 e-mail: boris.barov@bspb.org

No	Exhibitor Stand #	INFORMATION ON THE EXHIBITORS	
		EXHIBITOR	CONTACT DETAILS
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INNOVATION PROJECT AWARDS

Organization	Project Title
1. Vrachansky Balkan Nature Park	Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park - “Eco-museum” in the Open
2. “Russe tourism council” Association	Ecotourism Development in the Roussenski Lom Nature Park
3. Rhodopes Youth Ecoorganization	Protected Sites – the Hidden Pearls of Rhodope Mountains
4. Bourgas Ecological and Rural Tourism Association	From Achtopol to Yabalkovo
5. Tourism Council – Etropole	The Protected Zones - a Spring of Life, Providing Water for the Tourists and the Local Community
6. ECOMOS Bulgarian National Committee	Complex Development of Ecological and Cultural Tourism in the Russenski Lom Nature Park
7. Strandja Nature Park Directorate	Organization of Periwinkle Festival
8. Central Balkan Ecotourism Association - Kalofer	Center for Eco and Survival Training in Nature
9. Tourism Council – Sapareva Bania	Eco Trail to the Goritsa Waterfall and Sokolov Izgled
10. Zlatni Piasatzi Nature Park Directorate	Nature for All
11. Rila Ecotourism Association	In Peace with Nature – Improving the Opportunities for Contact with Nature
12. Pirin Tourism Forum	Ecotrails in Pirin

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TV APPEARANCES AND RADIO BROADCASTS

Time and Date	TV Appearance / Radio Broadcast	Duration
24 July 8:03 a.m.	Announcement for the press conference in the prime morning news of “Horizont” program of the /BNR/	30 seconds
24 July 3:00 p.m.	Information about the press conference in the news of the “Horizont” Program of the BNR	30 seconds
24 July 5:30 p.m.	Information in the main news of “Hristo Botev” Program of the BNR	30 seconds
24 July 3:35 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the Bulletin of the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA) which goes to its 200 subscribers from Bulgarian media	65 lines
24 July 4 p.m.	Information in the news of the “Darik” Radio	30 seconds
24 July 3:40 p.m.	Information in the news of the “Express” Radio	50 seconds
24 July 3:15 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the “Daily News” Publication of BTA which is published in English and goes to all its subscribers in the country and abroad	32 lines
24 July 6:10 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the news of Nova TV	50 seconds
24 July 7:20 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the news of Evrocom TV	1,3 minutes
25 July 3:20 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the specialized environment program of Radio Bulgaria	6 minutes
26 July 11:00 p.m.	Interview with Dr. Donald Hawking in the “Sustainable Development” Program of the “Hristo Botev” Program of the BNR	5,5 minutes
24 August 7:30 p.m.	Reports on the Forum in the Eco Bell Program of Seven Days TV (the only specialized environmental TV program in country) including interviews of K. Georgieva, L. Popjordanov and S. Markovska	20 minutes
7 September 7:30 p.m. repeated on 14 September.	Report about work of the Kalofer Ecotourism Association and its preparation for the National Forum in the Eco Bell Program of Seven Days TV	20 minutes
24 September 11:00 a.m.	Life discussion in the studio of the Morning Show of Hristo Botev Program, BNR for the ecotourism development in the country with M. Ploughchieva, Nela Rachevitc, and Michail Mihailov’s participation	30 minutes

Time and Date	TV Appearance / Radio Broadcast	Duration
25 September 8:00 a.m.	Announcement for the press conference in the prime morning news of “Horizont” program of the /BNR/	20 seconds
25 September 11:20 a.m.	Interview with Peter Hetz in the “Before Lunch” Show of the “Horizont” Program of the BNR	12 minutes
25 September 5:25 p.m.	Report including interviews of P.Hetz and Jay Lee in the Afternoon Show of Radio Net	4 minutes
25 September 6:35 p.m.	Report including interview of Kamelia Georgieva in the news of the 2001 TV	3,5 minutes
25 September 4:15 p.m.	Report including interviews of P.Hetz and J. Lee in the Afternoon Show of Daric Radio	2,2 minutes
26 September 3:45 p.m.	Report from the Press Conference in the Specialized Environmental Program of Radio Bulgaria, BNR	9 minutes
27 September 3:18 p.m.	Report from the Press Conference in the specialized Sustainable Development Program of Hristo Botev, BNR	11 minutes
1 October 8:45 a.m.	Life participation in the studio of the Morning Show of bTV of the three deputy ministers – Iliaz, Ploughchieva and Hadjinikolov	15 minutes
2 October 8:30 a.m.	Report from the forum in the Morning Show of the National TV including interviews of deputy ministers Iliaz and Ploughchieva and P. Hetz	5 minutes
2 October 4:00 p.m.	Report from the Key Note Speakers meeting including interview of Peter Hetz in the afternoon news of Deutsche Welle German National Radio	1,2 minutes
2 October 7:00 p.m.	Information about the opening of the Forum in the prime news of “Horizont” program /BNR	40 seconds
2 October 6:30 p.m.	Information about the opening of the Forum in the news of “Darik” Radio	50 seconds
2 October 6:20 p.m.	Information about the opening of the Forum in the news of “Express” Radio	40 seconds
2 October 6:00 p.m.	Information about the Opening Ceremony in the news of “Vitosha” Radio	50 seconds
2 October 7:00 p.m.	Report from the Forum including interviews of Brian White and Gabor Vereczi in the prime news of Nova TV	2 minutes
2 October 7:00 p.m.	Report from the opening ceremony in the prime news of Seven Days TV	3 minutes
2 October 8:20 p.m.	Report from the opening ceremony of the Forum in the prime news “Po sveta i u nas” of the BNTV	1,5 minutes
2 October 11:20 p.m.	Report from the opening ceremony in the evening news of Evrocom TV	1,5 minutes
3 October 11:05 a.m.	Report from the Forum including 2 Key Note Speakers interviews in the “Before Lunch” Show of “Horizont”, BNR	7 minutes
3 October 4:40 p.m.	Report from the Forum including 3 interviews of Key Note Speakers in the Specialized program of Radio Bulgaria	6 minutes
4 October 8:15 a.m.	Life interview with Oliver Hillel in the Morning Show of BNTV	15 minutes

Time and Date	TV Appearance / Radio Broadcast	Duration
4 October 8:30 a.m.	Life interview of Kamelia Georgieva in the Morning Show of “Horizont”, BNR	10 minutes
4 October 3:00 p.m.	Report from the Forum including 4 interviews of the Conference Key Note Speakers in the Sustainable Development Show of Hristo Botev Program, BNR	15 minutes
4 October 5:00 p.m.	Information about the opening of the Forum in the news of “Darik” Radio	40 seconds
4 October 6:10 p.m.	Information about the opening of the Forum in the news of “Express” Radio	30 seconds
4 October 7:10 p.m.	Information about the Awards Ceremony in the prime news of “Horizont” program /BNR	20 seconds
4 October 6:43 p.m.	Information about the Awards Ceremony in the news of “Vitosha” Radio	50 seconds
4 October 7:30 p.m.	Report for the Samokov Ecotourism Association Innovative Project and the Awards Ceremony in the prime news of bTV	1,5 minutes
4 October 7:00 p.m.	Report from the Awards Ceremony in the prime news of Seven Days TV	1,5 minutes
4 October 6:00	Report from the Awards Ceremony in the prime news of Evrocom TV	1,5 minutes
4 October 10:10 p.m.	Report from the Awards Ceremony in the evening news of BNTV	1,2 minutes
5 October 10:45 a.m.	Interview of d-r Dimitar Peev regarding the Botanical Trail in the Saturday Morning Show “Zakuska na trevata” of Horizont, BNR	7 minutes
5 October 7:30 p.m.	Report from the Forum in the Eco Bell Program of Seven Days TV including interviews of deputy ministers Iliaz and Ploughchieva	15 minutes
6 October 12:30 p.m.	Report from the opening of the Botanical Trail in the news of BNTV	3 minutes
7 October 11:48 a.m.	Report for the Innovative Projects Competition including interviews of award winners – St. Zlatev from Strandja and V. Hristov from “Etropole” Eco society in the “Before Lunch” Show of the “Horizont”, BNR	6 minutes
7 October 12:30 p.m.	Report from the opening of the Botanical Trail in the prime time news of Deutsche Welle German National Radio	50 seconds
7 October 4:00 p.m.	Interview of d-r Dimitar Peev regarding the Botanical Trail in the afternoon news of Deutsche Welle German National Radio	1,20 minutes

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PUBLISHED ARTICLES

№	Edition	Date	Notes
1.	Banks, investments , money magazine	7/2002	Interview with deputy minister Hadjinikolov
2.	Bulgarian Army Daily	30.07.02, page 11	A whole page with photos
		25.07.02 , page 3	Information
		26.09.02 , page 2	Article
		2.10.02 , page 2	Information
		03.10.02 , page 3	Report with one photo
		07.10.02 , page 3	Information
3.	Dnevnik Daily	24.07.02 , page 10	Information
		03.10.02 , page 4	Report with one photo
		04.10.02 , page 10	Information
		07.10.02 , page 11, page 12 in English	Article
4.	Duma Daily	05.10.02 , page 5	One photo with text
5.	Newspaper For the Woman Weekly	10-16.10.02 , page 3	Report with photos
6.	Zemia Daily	25.07.02 , page 4	Information
		26.09.02 , page 5	Report
		03.10.02 , page 4	Report
		04.10.02 , page 5	Interview with Peter Hetz with a photo
7.	Capital Weekly	5-11.10.02 , page 3	Information with photo
		5-11.10.02 , page 11	Article
8.	Cash Weekly	27.09.02 , page 4	Information with photo
		04.10.02 , page 16	Report with photos and an interview with Brian White
9.	Monitor Daily	25.09.02 , page 21	Information
		03.10.02 , page 10	Report
		05.10.02 , page 19	Article with photos
10.	Novinar Daily	25.07.02 , page 21	Information
		26.09.02 , page 5	Report
		05.10.02 , page 4	Photo with text

№	Edition	Date	Notes
11.	Pari Daily	03.10.02 , page 10	Report with photo
		04.10.02 , page 2	Information
12.	Sega Daily	23.09.02 , page 6	Information
		03.10.02 , page 5	Report with photo
		05.10.02 , page 2; 8	Information
13.	Standart Daily	25.07.02 , page 10	Information
		03.10.02 , page 10	Report with photo
		04.10.02 , page 9	Interview with Donald Hawkins with one photo
		05.10.02 , page 3	Photo with text to it
14.	Stroitelstvo Gradat Weekly	7-13.10.02 ., page 3, 4	Report with photos
15.	Tryd Daily	10.10.02 г.,page 7	Report with 4 photos
		18.1002	Interview with Donald Hawkins with photos
16.	Tema Magazine	7-13.10.02 г, page 82-83	Article with a photo
17.	Tryd Daily	25.09.02	Information
		Supplement Sofianets, page 3,	
		03.10.02 , page 8	Information
		28.08.02 , Supplement, page 3	
18.	Factor Weekly	7-13.10.02 , page 14	Information with a photo
19.	24 Hours Daily	03.10.02 , page 8	Report with photo
		04.10.02 , page 8	Information
		05.10.02 , page 8	Photo with text
20.	BTA Bulletin to all 200 media subscribers of the agency in Bulgaria and abroad	1.10.02 2.10.02 3.10.02 4.10.02 5.10.02	Detailed reports from the Forum
21.	Daily News, Bulletin of BTA issued in English	3.10.02	Information
		4.1002	Report
22.	Blue link information network	24.09-4.10.02	4 reports
23.	www.novinite.com	24.09.02 , in English	4 reports and 1 interview with Oliver Hilel
24.	www.novotovreme.bg	23.07-4.10.02	5 reports

novinite.com

2002-10-04

Oliver Hillel: Bulgaria Should Tap Ecotourism Experience of Others

Oliver Hillel is the Tourism Program Coordinator for UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics based in Paris, France. A biologist with a Master's Degree in Environmental Education and MBAs on Managerial Accounting and Hotel Management, Mr. Hillel is a fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation's LEAD program, and has over 15 years experience in the tourism sector working in training and development programs, consulting, cost control and auditing, and tourism operations. Oliver Hillel is one of the organizers and participants in the International Summit in Quebec, Canada, dedicated to the International Year of Ecotourism. At the Forum in Sofia he was the keynote speaker on the theme Ecotourism Legislation, Regulation & Institutional Frameworks.

Oliver Hillel met Milena Hristova, Editor of the News and Novinite.com

Q: Can you name some of the international practices and experiences that can serve as models for codes and standards of ecotourism for Bulgaria?

A: Bulgaria shares with some other countries the same circumstance of having a rich natural heritage and very significant biodiversity. It also has a really significant culture and historical traditions to show. Having in mind the fact it is a country in transition and developing its own economy, you can compare Bulgaria in many things to countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica or Australia. These countries also have in their natural heritage one of the main assets for tourism. It is important to consider that tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. About seven hundred million are international visitors throughout the world in 2002. Therefore the choice of the Bulgarian government to launch an ecotourism strategy for Bulgaria is a very good proposition. It is clear that the government is committed to it. Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg committed to ecotourism as a valuable tool for Bulgaria in his opening of the Ecotourism Event.

There are a number of experiences upon which Bulgaria can build its program for ecotourism. One such example is Australia, a leader in international ecotourism marketing, with more than ten years of an operational ecotourism strategy. Another such country is my home country Brazil that has more than seven years of experience in promoting its ecotourism strategy. It is positive for Bulgaria to base its own strategy on the experience of those other countries. And this is what I am here to do, to suggest and bring ideas to the Bulgarian players in this area.

Q: How can foreign organizations contribute to hammering out a National Tourism Strategy?

A: There are basically three ways in which agencies such as the United Nations Environment Program, along with United Nations Development Program, the World Tourism Organization and UNESCO can contribute. Each can bring suggestions, advice and ideas for Bulgarian players to use according to their needs. We can also help build the capacity over the long

term. I would like to underline that in order for tourism to be successful you must have a government knowing what ecotourism is all about and committed to it, and also build the capacity of a tourism industry to receive travelers. And this requires very specific skills and abilities. Last, but not least, local authorities, local communities and non-governmental organizations are the focal point for many of these skills development. The Tourism Program at the United Nations Environment Program can help train these people and pass on the technical skills.

We can also bring the lessons Bulgaria has learnt and the progress Bulgaria is making to the benefit of other countries. Bulgaria has been the first country in Eastern Europe to come up with a biodiversity strategy. According to my information currently, Bulgaria has been the only country to proclaim an ecotourism strategy. I have never seen in Europe the three relevant government ministries sign an agreement such as the Protocol for cooperation in ecotourism that was signed by the Environment and Waters, Economy, and Agriculture Ministry October 4. Bringing the two elements together is a unique experience in Europe. Bulgaria is becoming a leader among economies in transition in Eastern Europe.

Q: What is your advice on the extensive research that needs to be made for Bulgaria's ecotourism to be successful?

A: Bulgaria's tourism industry is already an advantage. There are established destinations for specific markets in Eastern or Western Europe. In my opinion this is the way the research and market intelligence should begin. Building upon your existing markets is a very good idea, as well as extending to relatively well-researched markets especially in Western Europe. There are limits to national research. That is why particular local governments and particular destinations in Bulgaria should be encouraged to conduct their own market research.

Q: What are Bulgaria's other competitive advantages?

A: Bulgaria is a country with a sense of safety for the tourists and incredible hospitality. The natural attractions of the many national parks and the countryside almost overshadows the diversity of cultural and historical traditions. This combination makes Bulgaria still relatively exotic and interesting for most tourists coming to Bulgaria. Bulgaria also has pretty good basic infrastructure - airports, roads, hotels. Yet there is still some capacity in the existing infrastructure to absorb more tourists. As soon as the little hotels, the countryside inns, the existing facilities reach a very profitable situation, others start to develop.

Q: Ecotourism is viewed as a tool for economic growth. Which are the communities with the best potential for such a development?

A: Ecotourism is mostly a phenomenon of rural communities close to legally and officially protected areas. For Bulgaria the combination between rural and agrotourism with ecotourism will be best way to go.

Q: How can Bulgaria improve its image marketing policy?

A: The current messages that Bulgaria is sending out shows that the image marketing policy is very good, well-based in its cultural traditions. Still there are two aspects that I would like to see changed and they are connected with the coastal development in tourism. The first is

the shift from infrastructure to natural attractions. The traditional sun and sand beach tourism image, has to include the inland attractions and the natural attractions at the beachside. The way beachside resorts are promoted is still focused on the old paradigm of lying on the beach. Bulgaria must concentrate on a more active attitude, since ecotourists want to do things.

Q: Can you describe the typical ecotourist in terms of social status, age?

A: The internationally accepted profile of the ecotourism traveler is relatively older, normally with family, of an upper economic range. But I would not want to limit it to that. In Latin America there are many, many destinations which did very well with exactly the opposite kind of tourism travelers - young, spending relatively little every day, going on bike and horses. These places benefited from these people. The only characteristic of an ecotourist is that he/she likes nature and culture, and is not dependent on the big tourism infrastructure.

Q: How will the United Nations Environment Program cooperate with the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Waters and the other ministries, participating in the strategy?

A: The United Nations Environment Program is not a financing institution. What we can do is provide technical cooperation - technology, knowledge, the skills and experience from other countries. We also can work together to develop concrete proposals and work on them with other providers of technical and financial assistance.

Standart Daily, October 4th

THE BEAUTIFUL NATURAL SCENERY GIVES BULGARIA ITS CHANCE

**FOREIGNERS DEMAND A CLEAN ROOM WITH BATHROOM IN THE COUNTRY
The language barrier is the biggest obstacle to ecotourism,
says Professor Donald Hawkins**

by Evgenia ANGELOVA

Professor Donald Hawkins is President of the Marketing Directors' Association of the US Tourism Industry and an advisor to the World Tourism Organization.

In the past two years he has acted as permanent consultant to Bulgaria on ecotourism, by way of the Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project, sponsored by the US Agency for International Development. Professor Hawkins is the principal consultant to the National Ecotourism Strategy.

Professor, Hawkins, do little hotels and country inns have a future in Bulgaria?

I have been in small hotels in the Balkan and Rila Mountains. They are still fledging, seeking ways to improve the standard of amenities and services they offer. I believe that hotel owners are starting to work together on marketing issues. They jointly develop tourist maps, guidebooks and web pages. Hotels are developing at a brisk rate. I have participated in projects that needed extra funds. We provided them. In other cases they needed technical innovations. We helped local hoteliers establish contacts with foreign tour operators, who shared with them their experience with other national parks in their respective countries, which have highly developed ecotourism. With the collaboration of the Bulgarian Alternative Tourism Association we are presently developing the Bulgarian Home initiative that will include an overnight and breakfast at a village house; it is doing quite well. This is yet another positive step forward. I think we have to explore possibilities to upgrade chalets in the Bulgarian mountains. They are quite popular in principle, but still in need of upgrading.

Are promotion and financial support currently the most important factors for rural and ecotourism?

People in the industry need help in developing business plans, marketing efforts and advertising strategies. And also, they need to be provided with some extra funding.

Which areas of Bulgaria are most suitable for developing alternative tourism?

The three national parks. They are an example of the rich diversity of biological species in your country. I'd also mentioned the protected areas, which operate under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. People living close to these protected areas, near the mountains, can benefit financially from their proximity.

What are the expectations of foreigners coming to Bulgaria for rural tourism?

They would like to learn how the local people live, to get to know their culture. They wish to see for themselves what life in the country is like, how village people go about their daily routine. I know of several cases where foreigners spent time with local villagers, engaged in farming and working in the fields. But what most visitors care about is culture and nature. Foreign tourists expect their hosts to find a way to cross the language barrier, by using interpreters or otherwise. Bulgaria should provide for the mutual understanding of English, French and German speakers and their Bulgarian hosts. This must be quite a challenge, especially in rural communities. Foreigners also expect to be provided the most basic amenities: clean rooms, bathrooms and so on.

How many people visit Bulgaria for purposes of ecotourism?

I don't have any such data.

In what way should ecotourism sites and destinations be promoted? By the government, by NGOs, by the hotel owners themselves?

Most people learn about ecotourism opportunities from people they know. The media are another important channel of disseminating information about the Bulgarian natural scenery and the attractions of rural tourism. We should organize a purpose-oriented promotional campaign via the Internet, through maps and brochures. And yet, the best way to advertise is to offer tourists proper conditions for spending their vacation in Bulgaria.

What are the prospects for developing ecotourism in Bulgaria?

Ecotourism in your country is very poorly developed. You are utilizing some 5-10% of your potential. However, you have enormous potential. You can boost the number of foreign visitors to Bulgaria. In a short-time perspective, the most important task is to present Bulgaria as a destination aiming primarily at the conservation of nature and the enormous biodiversity. At present, Bulgaria is known for traditional tourism. But the development of ecotourism, of culture-related tourism would be instrumental to promoting the good image of Bulgaria. In this way your country may become a regional leader, which in turn will bring more investment.

Cash Weekly, Oct. 4th, 2002

USING ECOTOURISM TO WAKE UP THE COUNTRYSIDE

Joint ventures with overseas partners are the best way

By Yuliana DIMITROVA

Bulgaria is a country of world magnitude in terms of its natural diversity and cultural heritage. Actively involved in promoting this country as an ecotourism destination is the Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project (BCEGP), co-sponsored by the US Agency for International Development and the Government of Bulgaria. A three-day forum convened in the Bulgarian capital as a meeting point of experts on ecotourism and representatives of international institutions seeking to provide assistance to small business development an environmental conservation.

The Forum on Ecotourism, Mountains and Protected Areas – Partners in Prosperity saw its main objective in harnessing international experience in the development of a national strategy on ecotourism, and thus to put Bulgaria on the global map of attractive destinations, say the Forum's co-sponsors: BCEGP, the Ministry of the Environment and Waters, and the Ministry of the Economy. Among the participants in the forum are experts from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, France, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK, and other nations. According to Gabor Verezi of the World Tourism Organization, ecotourism in Bulgaria will help diversify the tourism product, which at present is concentrated mostly along the Black Sea coast. The most suitable formula to attract overseas partners, says Sylvie Blangui of the International Ecotourism Association, is through setting up partnerships with international tour operators who would come to personally check out the routes and destinations; by setting up joint ventures with them, local operators will seek to attract foreign visitors. Arthur Pedersen, world heritage and tourism consultant for UNESCO, says that ecotourism in Bulgaria can help in the management of protected territories by providing economic alternatives to the local communities, while at the same time facilitating environmental conservation activities. By developing this segment of the services industry, small and medium-size businesses receive a much-needed boost while new jobs are generated in the rural areas, according to experts.

An appropriate ecotourism policy will contribute to raising the economic and social prosperity of rural communities and ensuring the sustainable development of ecosystems while improving the profit margin of tour operators, says Dr. Brian White of the World Tourism and Travel Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lower Taxes Provide Stimuli

A coherent policy in the ecotourism sphere is one of the pre-conditions for creating the institutional and economic tools for enabling the interested parties to develop tourism products and manage this entire process to their own benefit, says Oliver Hillel, coordinator of the Tourism Program of the UN Environment Program. Several main factors determine the status of Bulgaria in this respect, which can be harnessed for turning the country into an attractive ecotourism destination in South-Eastern Europe. The Ministries and Government agencies engaged in regulating this industry should strictly define the roles of executive and regulatory bodies, says Mr. Hillel. Ecotourism is not easy to develop; it takes stimuli such as lower taxes, personnel training and setting up concessions on public land with operators capable of ensuring the non-invasive, sustainable use of terrains. All players must never lose track of the potential negative impact of the tourist flow on the territory, even in remote and sparsely visited destinations. Part of the mechanism for conservation of the biological and cultural heritage is the setting up of a booking system, special routes via sensitive locations, as well as a system of product and destination certification. The other side of the coin is the generation of income that would ensure the regeneration of existing protected areas.

Central Balkan and Rila National Parks

Progress in Operationalizing Their Models

Important Pilot Community Results

Kalofer, Central Balkan National Park

- Identified 3 tour packages—Monastery Tour, Along the King's Road, The Heaven Route
- Number of registered tourist establishments increases from 3 to 14.
- Number of private rooms increased from 10 to 50.
- Beds are expected to increase from 50 to 100 in 2003.
- Tourists and Bed-nights 50% increase
 - 2001 500 tourists staying an average of 2 nights—1000 overnights;
 - 2002 750 tourists staying an average of 2 nights—1,500
- Number of registered mountain guides more than doubled - 2 to 5 – new employment.
- Owners are using their own equity for expansion and operations; several used the Beautiful Bulgaria to renovate their properties;
- Established pricing policies for foreign and Bulgarian tourists – “same price policy”
- Opening of the Kalofer Information and Destination Management Center with arts/crafts shop, information facility – 2 November 2002.
- Registration of Ecotourism Association, membership doubles during move from initiative group to full NGOs.

Samokov, Rila National Park

- Hotel Zodiak – owner Emilia Borissova - first commercial loan investment of 70, 000 leva obtained with UD/FLAG support.
- Number of registered tourist establishments increases from 4-12.
- Capital Assets increase from 600,000 to 720,000 leva, sales turnover from 300, 000 to 340,000 leva, and total number of employed staff from 20 to 25
- Registration of Ecotourism Association, membership increases by 50% during move from initiative group to full NGO.
- Established pricing policies for foreign and Bulgarian tourists – “same price policy”

GENERAL

Both pilot areas—identified major attractions, established eco symbols, songs, and branding concepts; also, pictograms to describe basic services.